

## \$2.9 million settlement reached in fatal Plum explosion

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The family of a man killed in a 2008 Plum house explosion and his granddaughter who was injured will receive a combined \$2.9 million from a lawsuit settlement.

Allegheny County court records show that Mary Pat Leith, widow of Richard J. Leith who died in the blast, will receive \$2.65 million. His granddaughter, Gianna Pettinato, who was thrown more than 50 feet and suffered a broken leg, will receive \$250,000 placed in a trust.

After attorneys' fees and expenses, Leith will receive \$1.69 million and Pettinato will get \$154,000, according to the agreement.

Common Pleas Judge Eugene Strassburger approved the settlement last week. Strassburger and Judge Lawrence J. O'Toole approved Pettinato's portion.

Leith, 64, of Penn Township was killed March 5, 2008, when the explosion destroyed the Pettinatos' home on Mardi Gras Drive. Leith was baby-sitting his granddaughter, then 4 years old.

Antonino and Tina Pettinato, Gianna's parents, filed the lawsuit on behalf of Gianna and Leith's estate in August 2008. Mary Pat Leith is the executrix of her husband's estate.

Tina Pettinato did not return a call for comment. Alan Perer, their attorney, declined to comment.

Ellie Cravotta, 71, who lives across the street from the empty lot where the Pettinatos' home used to be, said she keeps in touch with the family, who moved to Trafford.

"(Leith) was a wonderful, wonderful man. He was helpful, laid back and loved those kids. He lived for kids and grandchildren," said Cravotta, whose windows were blown out in the explosion. "He had just retired. He and Mary Pat were looking forward to doing things. Here's a man in his early 60s just starting to enjoy life without the pressures of work.

"They lost everything. All their memories, and they lost a father, a grandfather, a husband. No amount of money can compensate for that."

The settlement documents name Peoples Gas Co. Inc., Dominion Resources Inc., Kevin Higgins and his Apollo-based Higgins Plumbing, and W. Scott Lea III of W.S. Lea General Contracting in Apollo as defendants.

The court filings do not specify which companies are paying the settlement or how much each company must pay.

Sadie Kroeck, a spokeswoman for Peoples, declined to comment, saying the settlement was confidential. An attorney for Lea declined to comment and Higgins declined to comment, citing confidentiality reasons.

Dan Donovan, a spokesman for Dominion, said Dominion sold Peoples this year and no longer was involved in the lawsuit or responsible for settlement payments.